

MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT YOUR MEDICAL CARE

For all patients **18 years of age and older**



Children's National believes **each adult patient has the right to make health care decisions** to the extent of his or her ability. Children's also honors the laws of the District of Columbia about these rights. The following information tells you of your right to make important health care decisions for yourself. This includes the right to accept or refuse treatment in the future. This information also explains what "advance directives" are and how they might help you make sure that your wishes about your health care choices are respected.

WHAT ARE ADVANCE DIRECTIVES?

An advance directive is a written document in which you say what type of medical care you want in the future if you cannot make your own medical decisions. In the District of Columbia there are two kinds of advance directives:

- A. In a living will you say what type of medical care you do or do not want if you ever cannot make your own decisions. Usually a living will applies when you are in a final stage of an illness.
- B. In a durable power of attorney for health care you appoint a person to make decisions for you if you cannot make them yourself.

You can also combine these two kinds of advance directives into one legal document.

WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY ABOUT THIS ISSUE?

Children's National follows District of Columbia law about advance directives. We honor each adult patient's wishes about medical treatment. We will help you decide what your wishes are. We want you to tell us what you want in treatment decisions in case you later cannot make those decisions. Under D.C. law, if you do not have an advance directive and are not able to make a decision, your family will be asked to make these decisions for you.

HOW DO I WRITE AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

There are standard forms available or you can write your own. Here are the requirements that will make it legally binding.

- A. A living will must be:
 - 1. Signed and dated.
 - 2. Witnessed by two people
 - Who are not related to you
 - Who are not your doctors or caregivers
 - Who are not mentioned in your will
 - 3. Children's National employees and doctors cannot be your witnesses.
- B. A durable power of attorney for health care must be:
 - 1. Signed and dated.
 - 2. Witnessed by two people
 - Who are not related to you
 - Who are not your doctors or caregivers
 - Who are not mentioned in your will
 - 3. Name another person to make medical decisions for you if you cannot make them yourself.

WHO SHOULD I TALK TO ABOUT MY ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

Talk with your family and close friends about your wishes. Discuss it with your doctor. Social workers and chaplains are also available to talk with you and answer your questions.

WHAT SHOULD I SAY IN MY ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

You can say anything you want and appoint any person you choose to make your decisions. It is important to tell the person you appoint what you are deciding about these questions:

- Do you want to have CPR? That is, do you want to have a health care provider try to restart your heartbeat or breathing?
- Do you want to be fed by tube if you cannot eat or drink on your own?
- Do you want to be kept comfortable and free of pain as long as possible, even if that care prolongs your dying or shortens your life?

WHERE SHOULD I KEEP MY ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

You should have several copies of your directive. You should give one to your doctor and keep one for yourself. You should also give a copy to anyone else who might be making decisions for you. This may include your family, friends or religious advisor. It helps to have a note in your wallet saying where you keep your copy. Also, please give a copy to Children's National so it can be placed in your medical record.

WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND AFTER I HAVE WRITTEN IT?

You can change your mind or cancel your advance directive by:

1. Telling your doctor, nurse, or other healthcare worker.
2. Writing out a statement which cancels your advance directive.
3. Writing a new advance directive.

If you cancel your advance directive or revise it, give the cancellation statement to your doctor. Please send a copy to everyone who had your original advance directive.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I DO NOT WRITE AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

Children's Hospital will provide your care whether or not you write an advance directive. If you cannot make your healthcare decisions and you do not appoint someone or leave specific instructions, District of Columbia law will allow your relatives to make these decisions for you.

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT AT CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL IF I WANT TO DISCUSS MY ADVANCE DIRECTIVE BEFORE WRITING IT?

If you would like to talk about these important matters while at Children's National, please contact your doctor, social worker or chaplain at 202-476-3201.

WHERE CAN YOU GET FORMS AND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ADVANCE DIRECTIVES?

There are many places to get forms, including medical, religious, aging assistance, and legal organizations. Your advance directive does not have to be on any particular form. Adult patients of Children's National may also check the following resources for additional information about Advance Directives in the state of residency.

- **MARYLAND** residents

<https://www.oag.state.md.us/healthpol/advancedirectives.htm>

- **VIRGINIA** residents

http://www.vsb.org/sections/hl/2012_VA_AMD_Statutory-Form.pdf

- **STATES NOT MENTIONED ABOVE**

<http://www.caringinfo.org>.

THANK YOU for taking the time to read this information.

For additional information contact Department of Family Services to speak with a social worker or chaplain 202-476-3070.



Children's National™

111 Michigan Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20010
202-476-3070

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